News-Pages of the GSWC

The Genealogical Society of Washtenaw County, Michigan, Inc. 2 October 2018
To Accompany *Family History Capers* Vol. 42, No. 1

GSWC Meetings are held at 1:30 p.m. at the Education Center Auditorium, St. Joseph Mercy Hospital Campus, 5305 Elliott Drive, Ypsilanti, Michigan, usually the fourth Sunday of the month, September to May.

Upcoming Meetings Fall, 2018:

Sunday, October 28, 2018: "Colonial Research in America" given by Karen Krugman. **Class: "Colonial Experiences"** offered by GSWC Panel.

Sunday, December 2, 2018: "What You Need to Know about Will and Estate Records" by Jeff Mason. **Class: Beginning Genealogy, Part 2: Census Records** by TBD and **City Directories** by Marcia McCrary.

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Report on Recent Meetings:

September 23, 2018: "Researching Polish Family History" presented by Patricia Yocum.

Researching your Polish ancestry can be daunting. However, there are now many volunteers in Poland and the US who can help.

There are four points to remember when doing Polish research:
1) Polish history
2) Polish language
3) Names
4) De-centralized nature of vital records in both US and Poland.

From 1795-1918 there was no Polish state. It was partitioned between Prussia, Russia, and Austria-Hungary. During this time, depending on where your ancestor lived, the official language could be German or Russian. The church was put in charge of vital records, which were kept from the 1770s on, often in Latin. Some priests kept a second set of records in Polish. People did not move around much, so finding your ancestor's village will likely give a century or more worth of records. Poland then existed as a country from 1918 until the Nazi takeover in WWII, after which it has been a sovereign nation again. The country's borders were shifted to the west after WWII, accompanied by mass relocations of people and their records.

The Polish language is Slavic with Latin-like grammar. Many times, diacritical marks are missing from records and misspellings are common. Many names were Germanized or Anglicized. People's names were also simplified phonetically by non-Polish speakers. Children are often named after relatives or saints, and surnames may show gender or marital status. The names of larger cities might have been changed to a German or Russian version. On top of this, in the 1990s, the names of provinces were changed.

The prime tools to use in doing Polish research are the Ellis Island "Passenger Search" found at https://www.libertyellisfoundation.org/passenger, "One-step Webpages" by Steven Morse located at https://stevemorse.org/, FamilySearch, and Google Maps. The Polish Genealogical Society of Michigan can also be of help.

In summary, Polish research is challenging and takes patience, flexibility and imagination. However, there are many on-line tools, as well as volunteers to help you find your Polish ancestry.

Reported by Tim Salatin

Class: Beginning Genealogy, Part 1: "Organizing Your Genealogy" shared by Bobbie Snow.
Bobbie said: "There's madness in my method", and showed some of the pitfalls. She then told us you could use Google to find many videos and explanations on organizational methods to assist you in finding a something that works for you. Some of us feared she was going to stop there, but luckily, she went on to review the way we used to do research: going to libraries, mailing requests, visiting courthouses and cemeteries, and the paper piling up.

After she retired, she read: *The Genealogy Do-Over Workbook* by Thomas MacEntee, and agreed it was time to go back and do it a different way. She checked for all the pertinent censuses, and closely analyzed the 1800-1840 censuses for her family.

She highly recommended *Mastering Genealogical Proof* by Thomas Jones. Some of his points:
Look at what information you need, and how to write it up. Learn the best way to use Word and Excel. Be clear. Find the gaps. Analyze. Use timelines, Decide where you need to make a research trip. All materials are not available on the internet. Ask yourself what are

your organizing strengths and limitations. What do I want to accomplish? By when? And what after that? Set small goals.

She has also decided to put her full tree up on Ancestry, to share her work. A lively discussion ensued talking about the risks and benefits of posting a family tree.

Omer Jean Winborn continued with more information about "**Beginning Genealogy, Part 1**", adding an emphasis on the differences with African-American research. Start with yourself. Find stories and do interviews with family and friends. Be aware that the spelling of names may vary, or have been changed. Use all four areas of the census: population, the mortality schedules of 1850 to 1889, the agriculture schedule and state censuses. She is looking forward to the release of the 1950 census in 2022.

Sometimes alternates to censuses need to be used: family Bibles, baptismal records, and other sources. The books she found most helpful were Tony Burroughs' *Black Roots* and *The Source*.

Continue to share your stories with relatives. Have your DNA tested and correspond with close matches. Learn about the Canadian influence on African Americans.

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GSWC Items:

The next meeting of the **DNA Special Interest Group** will be Saturday, October 27. Contact GSWC member Rodger Wolf at rawolf@umich.edu.

Various **volunteer** opportunities are available with the GSWC. Help is needed proofreading articles and transcriptions. This does not need to be a local resident! Also transcribing projects could be set up using digital pictures of materials. Writing a story from your own research for publication in the *Family History Capers* is another way to get involved. Contact Marcia McCrary for specifics at info@washtenawgenealogy.org.

Don't overlook the services of the **GSWC Research Committee** if you are stuck with a Washtenaw County problem. Use the instructions under "Research Requests", which is a button near the bottom of the left hand side of the home page at http://washtenawgenealogy.org. Coming soon will be instructions on how to request research via the internet, and make an online donation for this service.

Hidden Treasures in Family Bibles

One often forgotten record source is the family Bible. Bible records can contain very valuable information that may not be found anywhere else, and you might even find handwritten records from your ancestor! Many family Bibles are lost with time, forgotten in the attic, or discarded by someone who did not know it contained records, so donating a copy of the record to the GSWC Bible Records Registry is a way to preserve the information. The registry currently has copies of over 350 records and is looking for more. So far, almost half of the records have been published (with permission) in *Family History Capers* allowing for more widespread access to family researchers. Please visit the GSWC website for information on the Bible records in the collection or if you have a family record—from a Washtenaw County family or not—you would like to donate. Judi Bornemeier

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Upcoming Events:

Coming up quickly: Western Michigan Genealogical Society presents **"Got Ancestors?! 2018"** on **Saturday, October 13, 2018** from 9 a.m. to 4:45 pm at the Salvation Army Kroc Center, 2500 South Division Ave. Grand Rapids, Michigan. Registration and full details are found at http://GotAncestors.com. Or call (616) 554-7266

The Michigan Genealogical Council Fall Seminar will feature **JOHN PHILIP COLETTA!** This will be held on **Saturday, November 3, 2018** from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Michigan Library and History Center, 702 W. Kalamazoo, Lansing, Michigan. Four presentations: "Finding the Town of Origin: U.S. Sources for Discovering an Ancestor's Native Town Overseas"; "Lesser Used Federal Records: Sources of Rich Detail about Ancestors' Lives"; "The County Courthouse: Your 'Trunk in the Attic'" and "Breaking through Brick Walls: Use your head!"

This is co-sponsored by the MGC, the Archives of Michigan and the Library of Michigan. Online registration is now open at https://mimgc.org/ (click on "Events Calendar", under November 3 look for "MGC 2018 Fall Family History Event Flyer").

Don't delay! Space may be limited.

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